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E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: NOMINATION FOR IQBAL MASIH AWARD FOR ELIMINATION
OF CHILD LABOR

REF: STATE 99123

¶1. Embassy Bogota would like to nominate the Cartagena Drivers Association (ASOCHOFECAR) for the Department of Labor's Iqbal Masih Award for the Elimination of Child Labor. Information requested in reftel is listed below.

¶2. Nomination information:

a) Cartagena Drivers Association (ASOCHOFECAR)

b) President: Juvencio Raul Castillo Quinonez, phone: (57)311-404-7563, address: Urbanizacion Las Palmeras, Manzana 19, Lote #3, Cartagena, Colombia.

c) The Cartagena Drivers Association initiated and funded a public campaign since August 2007 to combat child labor on busses, working with other transportation associations and labor leaders, including Coointrarcar and the Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (CUT), to formulate an agreement among the public transportation sector called "Improvement and Compliance in the Public Transportation Sector." The agreement was signed in October 2007. Children working on busses and mini buses must call out routes, monitor travel times, and collect bus fares. These children (called "sparrings" derived from boxing figures) are paid solely on commissions, often earning as little as 0.50 dollars a day. They must hold onto bus rails while hanging out of a moving vehicle, calling to pedestrians. The job is high-risk, involves long hours, lacks any formal contract, and clearly violates child labor laws and childrens' rights.

As a result of the public campaign and agreement, ASOCHOFECAR, reported that as of June 2008, 85% of the transportation sector in Cartagena had stopped hiring under-age children (ASOCHOFECAR has 100% eradication of child labor on their buses and cars). Out of the estimated 2,000 buses and micro-buses in Cartagena, approximately 1,700 had replaced what they call the "sparring" (usually a minor in charge of recording bus times and/or collecting bus fares) with an adult suitable for the job.

Beyond this initiative, ASOCHOFECAR has worked with the Ministry of Social Protection (MSP) on labor law compliance for over a decade. When the Ministry of Social Protection sought follow-up implementation on voluntary agreements made by the transportation sector on child labor since the agreement was signed, they discovered ASOCHOFECAR had unilaterally eradicated child labor, while other firms were continuing child labor practices. ASOCHOFECAR helped MSP identify the non-compliant companies to further enforce the agreements.
BROWNFIELD